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SIPDIS

NOFORN

NSC FOR ZKHALILZAD, JDWORKEN, HMANN, RHANSON, DSEDNEY
DEPT FOR SA/PAB, SA/AR, S/CT

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SUBJECT: SE KHALILZAD'S APRIL 11 MEETING WITH FM ABDULLAH

Classified By: AMBASSADOR ROBERT P. FINN FOR REASONS
1.5 (B) AND (D)

11. (C) Summary: During his April 11 meeting with FM Abdullah, SE Khalilzad addressed both regional and domestic Afghan developments. Khalilzad suggested that the renewed activity of the Taliban and other destabilizing elements in the South might be addressed through a trilateral (U.S.-Afghan-Pakistani) working group. Abdullah responded favorably to this proposal, noting he welcomed improving relations with Pakistan. Khalilzad also sought Abdullah's views on priority domestic issues that demanded immediate attention. FM Abdullah suggested that the top three priority issues were ensuring successful results for the Constitutional Commission, the Election Commission, and ANA/NDS reform. End Summary.

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SE Khalilzad Offers Trilateral
Working Group Proposal

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12. (C) SE Khalilzad met with Afghan FM Abdullah on April 11 to review conditions in Afghanistan. Accompanying Khalilzad were the Ambassador, NSC's Rebecca Hanson, DOD/OSD's Mustafa Popal and Econ/Commo (notetaker). SE Khalilzad began discussions by noting his concern about the poor state of Afghan-Pakistan relations. The recent killing of an ICRC worker in Kandahar and reported Pakistani and Taliban cross-border incursions were of great concern to Washington. SE Khalilzad proposed a trilateral arrangement as a means to address this growing problem. He proposed further that CJTF-180 commander, General McNeill, could head a high-level standing committee which would meet monthly. Others could form a working-level body that could meet more frequently. The goal of these trilateral arrangements would be to stop all Taliban activities in Afghanistan. Khalilzad noted he had not yet proposed this idea to President Karzai and hoped to get the FM's views first.

13. (C) Abdullah responded that concern was indeed growing over Taliban activities in Afghanistan. In Ghazni, for example, the Taliban had time to establish a network and launch concerted operations recently. This level of organization worried Abdullah. Abdullah noted that Pakistan complained about negative perceptions of Pakistan and poor Afghan treatment of Pashtuns in Afghanistan. The FM noted it would take time to reverse such feelings, but that this process would not be helped by such activities as the Taliban and Pakistan were reportedly engaged in. Abdullah reported that security forces in the South were now acting to destabilize the region.

14. (C) According to Abdullah, President Musharraf had complained of Indian covert destabilization activities in southern Afghanistan through the Indian consulate in Kandahar. Abdullah's opinion was that India was unlikely to engage in such activity, and had merely established its presence to promote its growing (mostly commercial) interests in Afghanistan. India was active in Afghanistan, Abdullah noted, including a promised donation of trucks and an offer of military training to the ANA, building the Zaranj-Delaram road, and a \$70m assistance pledge. Abdullah welcomed Pakistan balancing this commitment from their side and Pakistan's involvement in Afghanistan, but rejected any notion that Pakistan could veto Indian activities here. Abdullah concluded that establishing military and intelligence-led trilateral discussions was the best way to begin addressing these issues. The diplomatic channel, he added, obliged parties to take sides on these issues. Ambassador noted that the diplomatic channel was, however, useful as a marker of progress.

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A Review of Domestic Conditions

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15. (C) SE Khalilzad, acknowledging that domestic issues were not the FM's specific responsibility, then asked FM Abdullah for his view on current conditions inside Afghanistan. Khalilzad said that there was not as much progress in some

areas as hoped, including the security sector generally, the progress of the national army, establishing a clear DDR policy, Ministry of Defense reform towards becoming a national organization, and limited progress on NDS (National Directorate of Security) reform.

16. (S/NF) Abdullah agreed that there had been less progress than hoped for in these areas. The FM noted that misunderstandings between OMC and General Baryalai over organizational models for the ANA had caused some delays. Abdullah noted that models for ANA organizational arrangements must be adapted to fit Afghan circumstances. Further, greater levels of support from the local leadership was needed to recruit soldiers from Kandahar and Jalalabad, which was critical to establishing the required ethnic diversity of the ANA. Turning to DDR, Abdullah noted that practical and political considerations were involved in the selection of the first effected regions) early success was key to this effort. An apparent misunderstanding over the appropriate numbers of forces involved and whether NDS operations would be fully funded by the U.S had also slowed reform of NDS. These NDS issues were now apparently resolved, and according to Abdullah, NDS Chief Aref had told him reform was ready to move forward.

17. (C) Abdullah then turned to the controversy over appropriate methods of holding the annual celebration (&jashn8) of the Mujaheddin victory over the Soviets. The main concern was whether the ANA) rather than Mujaheddin fighters exclusively - would march in this event,s parade. Abdullah recommended that the ANA should participate to illustrate its role as a national military force. The Ambassador noted he was aware of this issue and said the parade should not take place. He had discussed this with President Karzai twice, and told him that an all-Mujaheddin event would send the wrong signal at the wrong time) with elections coming up and the constitution being drafted. Further, it was a violation of the Bonn Agreement. The Ambassador suggested that a celebration of peace, rather than a military event, might be more appropriate. Abdullah noted that last year,s celebrations were &too military8, but added that it was not simply a matter of Kabul,s celebrations - this event would be celebrated in cities throughout Afghanistan. Ambassador noted that the character of the celebration would be a key issue.

18. (C) Abdullah then turned to Taliban activities in the provinces, reporting that they were very focused on the provinces. The Taliban knows what,s happening in Zabol, he added, but we do not. Abdullah also offered his assessment on the 2004 elections, reflecting pessimism that the work of the Constitutional Commission was proceeding quickly enough. SE Khalilzad suggested that the U.S. and Afghan governments needed to decide on a set of high priority issues to work on closely together. Khalilzad warned that criticism would grow unless progress accelerated, and that a mechanism for addressing these priority issues was needed. Khalilzad asked Abdullah for his recommendation of the top two or three items which needed to be brought to closure. Abdullah quickly suggested the following priorities: 1) the Constitutional Commission, 2) the Election Commission, and 3) ANA/NDS reform. SE Khalilzad shared his concern over the level of cooperation from the MOD, noting that MOD reform was key to many other areas. The Ambassador added that we needed to stress continued U.S. commitment to remaining engaged in Afghanistan and our strong support of reforms. If such reforms happen, we need to continue our support for the reformed organizations so that they will not be left isolated. Ambassador added his view that the NDS reform will ultimately be successful.

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